

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OES-07 /075 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8752

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDIB CT

SUBJ: PLANNING FOR EMPEROR BOKASSA'S CORONATION

SUMMARY:

1. PRIME MINISTER PATASSE CALLED ME IN JUNE 2 TO REQUEST USG ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING SATELLITE TRANSMISSION OF THE DECEMBER 4 CORONATION CEREMONIES. HE HAD EARLIER CALLED IN THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO ASK FOR EXTENSIVE AID FOR CEREMONIAL ASPECTS OF THE CORONATION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD ME THAT DECEMBER 4, 1977, THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMPIRE, HAD BEEN CHOSEN FOR THE CORONATION OF EMPEROR BOKASSA. THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO ENSURE THAT THE CEREMONIES RECEIVED THE WIDEST POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY. HE ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS ANY WAY IN WHICH WE COULD HELP WITH THE LIVE TRANSMISSION OF TELEVISION COVERAGE VIA SATELLITE. I SAID THAT SATELLITE COVERAGE WAS OF COURSE POSSIBLE TECHNICALLY BUT THE PROBLEM WAS THE CREATION OF A TRANSMISSION CAPABILITY IN BANGUI. I SAID THAT FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AT THE TIME OF THE CORONATION OF THE KING OF NEPAL, IT WOULD BE MUCH LESS COSTLY TO FLY OUT VIDEO TAPES OF THE

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CEREMONIES FOR BROADCAST BY MAJOR EUROPEAN AND OTHER NETWORKS. THIS COULD BE DONE WITHIN HOURS OF THE EVENTS. I SAID, HOWEVER, I WOULD PASS HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANY WAY IN WHICH WE CAN BE HELPFUL. PATASSE ALSO TOLD ME THAT THE EMPEROR WOULD BE INVITING COL. STUART ROOSA, THE FORMER US ASTRONAUT, TO ATTEND THE CORONATION.

3. PATASSE HAD EARLIER CALLED IN THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO REQUEST THAT FRANCE LEND THE CAE SEVERAL TRANSALL AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT THE HORSES WHICH HAVE BEEN ORDERED FOR THE IMPERIAL COACH AND GUARD (ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL PRESS REPORTS 130 HORSES ARE ON ORDER). THE PRIME MINISTER HAS ALSO ASKED THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT SEND A CONTINGENT OF THE GARDE REPUBLICAINE (SIC) TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CEREMONIES. FINALLY, THE GOCAE PLANS TO IMPORT A LARGE NUMBER PEUGEOT, RENAULT AND SAVIEM CARS AND TRUCKS FOR USE AT THE CORONATION AND IS SEEKING A FRENCH GOVERNMENT (COFACE) CREDIT FOR THIS PURPOSE. THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAS TOLD

ME HE WAS RECOMMENDING SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN THESE REQUESTS. GIVEN BOKASSA'S TOTAL PREOCCUPATION WITH THE CORONATION AND THE IMPORTANCE WHICH HE ATTACHES TO ITS SUCCESS, FRANCE SHOULD NOT, IN AMBASSADOR PICQUET'S VIEW BE IN A POSITION OF UNDERMINING ITS SUCCESS. HE ACKNOWLEDGES, HOWEVER, THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN FRANCE MAY MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO RESPOND FAVORABLY IN ALL CASES.

4. COMMENT: THE PACE OF CORONATION PLANNING IS PICKING UP AND THE GOCAE IS CASTING AROUND FOR WAYS OF ENLISTING THE HELP OF OUTSIDERS IN THE EFFORT. WITH REGARD TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S REQUEST TO ME, I WOULD LIKE TO BE HELPFUL WITHOUT GETTING THE USG INTO A POSITION WHICH WOULD INVOLVE FINANCIAL INPUTS. THE ORIGIN OF THE REQUEST IS UNDOUBTEDLY OUR AIDSAT DEMONSTRATION IN WHICH WE SHOWED HOW EASY IT IS TO SET UP A DIRECT TELEVISION LINK BETWEEN BANGUI AND THE US. IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY USEFUL IF THE DEPARTMENT OR USIA COULD NOTIFY THE MAJOR US TELEVISION NETWORKS OF THE GOCAE'S INTEREST IN LIVE TV COVERAGE. THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CORONATION WILL BE A RATHER UNUSUAL AND COLORFUL NEWS ITEM AND MAY BE OF MORE THAN LOCAL INTEREST. IF THE NETWORK'S ARE INTERESTED THEY MAY WISH TO SEND ONE OF THEIR EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVES TO BANGUI TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE COVERAGE WITH THE GOCAE. I WOULD WELCOME ANY ASSISTANCE USIS PARIS CAN PROVIDE IN THIS REGARD. ONCE THE GOCAE IS DIRECTLY IN TOUCH WITH TELEVISION AND COMMUNICATIONS EXPERTS, I WOULD EXPECT IT TO HAVE A MORE REALISTIC VIEW OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE.

5. WITH RESPECT TO THE GOCAE'S INVITATION TO COL. ROOSA, THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER INCLUDING HIM IN THE US CORONATION DELEGATION. HE IS HIGHLY REGARDED BY BOKASSA WHO RECEIVED HIM AS A STATE GUEST DURING A PEOPLE TO PEOPLE VISIT IN 1973. HE MADE AN ADMIRABLE US REPRESENTATIVE AT THAT TIME. HE DOES, HOWEVER, HAVE SUBSTANTIAL BUSINESS INTERESTS IN THE CAE AND THIS FACT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND IN CONSIDERING HIM AS A POSSIBLE DELEGATION MEMBER.
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Message Attributes

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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TELECOMMUNICATION, CORONATION, REPRESENTATION AT CEREMONIES
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Expiration:
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